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ABSTRACT

Trends and issues concerning college attendance by adult students are reviewed. Trends seem to suggest that the rising educational attainment of the general population will result in increased demand for learning activities by older students. Data are provided on: estimated college enrollments for 1990 and projected population and enrollments in 1990 for ages 14-17 through 55-64; and 5-year enrollment trends among male and female students aged 25-34 by class standing and part- or full-time status. The increased enrollments of females and the social and personal factors accounting for their enrollment are addressed. Attention is also directed to the changing racial and ethnic demography of higher education, minority public school enrollment in fall 1980, the process of actively recruiting adult learners, the socioeconomic status of adult learners, the responses of colleges to adults on campus, and characteristics of younger and older students. Three stages of adaptation of the college to adult students are identified: the laissez-faire stage, the separatist stage, and the equity stage. Carole Kaswon's typology of students and eight suggestions by Edmund Ackell on reentry education are included. (SW)

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WORKING WITH NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS: WOMEN IN TRANSITION

by

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and
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INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities have long been considered institutions for youth. They are viewed as logical extensions of the progression from grade school to junior high school, from high school to college. As all inclusive as this progression sounds, many students are left stranded by the side of the road. The educational process loses students at almost every major intersection. Some drop out between junior high and high school and some finish high school and do not seek further education for reasons ranging from personal burnout to financial hardships. Others are fortunate enough to continue through college and may even seek post-graduate degrees. A rising phenomenon of our current educational process is that many who drop out seek re-entry later in their lives, returning to the system with added age, maturity, experiences--and greater expectations. Often these re-entry students are viewed, both by traditional students and faculty, as highly exceptional intruders on the domain of youth. Many institutions and educators have looked on this population and its educational requirements as marginal activity. Adults do not always fit easily or comfortably into this youth-oriented world. Colleges and universities seem to have an equally difficult adjustment when these adults become students.

Adults who do not have degrees are returning to the campus in record numbers in search of more education. (Carnegie Report, 1981) Nationally, over one-third of all students taking college credit-bearing courses are over the age of 25 (Margarrel, 1981). Slightly more than 52% of all college undergraduate students (of whatever age) are now women. (Hodgkinson, 1983) Yet, it has been estimated that only fourteen percent of Americans over the age of 25 have college degrees, making this a largely untapped market for future growth for colleges and universities as they are facing the realities of a stable or perhaps even a decreasing traditional aged population.

Ernest Boyer (1981) of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching indicates that for as far into the future as can be projected, the shape of American education is going to reflect older students' participation. He believes that this is perhaps the most significant shift in college population forecast since the baby boom expansion of the 1960's and that the impact of this new movement of older students is just beginning to be felt. (Carnegie Report, 1981)

WHO IS RETURNING AND WHY THEY RETURN

When viewing this adult student body, one must consider the population and its educational needs as a group. Just as with traditional students, many adults' needs are similar and require common responsive measures. Although re-entry students come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, financial abilities, and educational histories, they share many of the common problems of re-entry. This process can mean a disruption of former lifestyles and new, unfamiliar, challenging experiences that may bring with them emotional as well as educational perplexities.

Studies suggest that between one-in-three and one-in-five adults are currently involved in educational pursuits of one type or another. (Axford, 1980; Cross, 1982; Harrington, 1977; Heppner, 1982; Title, 1982) There seem to be several common indicators characteristic of adults engaging in re-entry learning.

I. PAST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Cross (1980) suggests that the past level of educational attainment may well be the single most important predicator of whether or not a person seeks re-entry. According to Cross, individuals who have graduated from high school will find themselves four times more likely to become involved in higher education than non-high school graduates. Future implications for colleges and universities are revealed in the projection that the general population of the United States is becoming better educated with each passing generation. The average adult over the age of 25 in 1980 had 12.3 years of schooling as compared with 9.3 years just one generation ago. (Gross, 1982; Golladay, 1976) Thus, it would seem that the rising educational attainment of the general population may well result in an increased demand for more learning activities by older students. The real numbers of adults seeking admission to universities and colleges also seems to project this trend. (See Table I)

TABLE I

Projections Show Increase in Enrollment of Older Students by 1990

Age group	Estimated enrollment in 1970	Proportion of population in 1970	Projected population in 1990	Projected enrollment in 1990	5-year change
14 through 17	311,000	1.9%	12,770,000	243,000	- 68,000
18 and 19	2,844,000	34.6%	7,195,000	2,488,000	-355,000
20 and 21	2,353,000	28.1%	7,511,000	2,128,000	-255,000
22 through 24	1,794,000	15.4%	10,641,000	1,638,000	-155,000
Total, 14 through 24	7,302,000	18.6%	37,917,000	6,499,000	-803,000
25 through 29	1,679,000	9.3%	20,169,000	1,876,000	+197,000
30 through 34	996,000	6.1%	20,917,000	1,276,000	+280,000
35 through 39	566,000	4.2%	19,261,000	809,000	+243,000
40 through 44	330,000	2.9%	17,331,000	503,000	+173,000
45 through 49	223,000	2.0%	13,869,000	378,000	+ 55,000
50 through 54	138,000	1.2%	11,442,000	137,000	- 2,000
55 through 64	111,000	0.5%	20,776,000	104,000	- 7,000
Total, 25 through 64	4,044,000	3.2%	123,765,000	4,963,000	+939,000
Total, 14 through 64	11,346,000	7.7%	161,682,000	11,482,000	+136,000

Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 4, 1981

These projected enrollment trends of older students become even more significant when viewed alongside the historical projection of five-year enrollment trends of older students. (See Tables I and II)

TABLE II

5-Year Enrollment Trend Among Older Students

Population aged 25 through 34

	1979			Change from 1974		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Total	16,715,000	17,674,000	34,389,000	+18.3%	+17.2%	+17.7%
In college	1,356,000	1,319,000	2,675,000	- 1.1%	+58.7%	+21.5%
Full time	558,000	364,000	920,000	- 0.7%	+41.6%	+12.5%
Part time	798,000	955,000	1,755,000	- 1.4%	+66.4%	+26.8%
Freshmen	160,000	281,000	441,000	-15.8%	+59.7%	+20.5%
Sophomores	193,000	212,000	405,000	-18.2%	+86.0%	+15.7%
Juniors	203,000	146,000	349,000	+19.4%	+43.1%	+28.3%
Seniors	193,000	138,000	331,000	- 7.7%	+84.0%	+16.5%
Graduates	606,000	543,000	1,149,000	+ 6.9%	+48.8%	+23.3%
2-year colleges	288,000	375,000	664,000	-16.5%	+70.5%	+17.5%
Full time	102,000	81,000	185,000	+ 3.0%	+52.8%	+21.7%
Part time	186,000	294,000	479,000	-24.4%	+76.0%	+16.0%
4-year colleges	460,000	402,000	862,000	0.0%	+62.8%	+21.9%
Full time	203,000	136,000	340,000	-14.0%	+33.3%	+ 1.2%
Part time	257,000	266,000	522,000	+14.7%	+83.4%	+40.7%

Population aged 35 and over

	1979			Change from 1974		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Total	42,437,000	49,427,000	91,864,000	+ 6.5%	+ 6.6%	+ 6.6%
In college	487,000	914,000	1,402,000	+ 2.3%	+66.8%	+36.8%
Full time*	81,000	147,000	228,000	-22.9%	+42.7%	+ 9.1%
Part time*	402,000	764,000	1,166,000	+ 9.2%	+72.5%	+43.8%

*Full-time or part-time status was not indicated by 0.6 per cent of the students.

Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 4, 1981

II. THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY

Women are returning to education as an increasing force and in ever-increasing numbers. One of the fastest growing student groups on college and university campuses are women 35 and over. (Cross, 1980; Naisbitt, 1982) In 1972, 418,000 women in this age group were in college. By 1976 this figure had grown to 700,000 an increase of 67%. This growth has continued at an increasing rate of participation. During the same period the enrollment of male students 35 and older grew from 365,000 to 489,000--an increase of only 34 percent. (Feeney, 1972; Apps, 1980) Between the years 1969 and 1975 the number of adult women learners has increased by 45 percent as compared to an 18 percent increase for men. (Cross, 1980) Naisbitt's Megatrends (1982) calls this new role for women the "option explosion" and he projects that the new options have significant implications for colleges and universities simply because of the projected numbers. There are now more women in college and graduate schools than men and the majority of these "new" college women are over the age of 35. This significant increase for female participants is due to a number of factors.

Historically there has been a continually increasing participation rate for women in education. A review by Feeney (1972) shows that, although progress has been continuous, it has been sometimes slow, and is still influenced by many of the same cultural and personal barriers that seem to have existed previously. According to Feeney, a complex set of social and personal forces bring women back to education:

1. Increased prosperity of the general population.
2. A re-evaluation of women's educational needs.
3. Expanding leisure time especially among middle-aged and elderly women.
4. Civil Rights Issues and the institutional need to comply with the law in admitting more women.
5. Women's need for education for teaching and technical jobs.
6. Higher status of women leading to social acceptability of women enhancing their knowledge.
7. Acceptance of modern psychological theories leading to self actualization through education.
8. Changing life patterns of women especially when considering the higher divorce rate and current trends of re-entry into the workplace and/or school.
9. Increased emphasis on the need for continuing education owing to the expansion of knowledge.
10. Enjoyment of learning.
11. Desire for professional growth.
12. Feelings of discontent and the need for change.
13. Sense of inadequacy with previous levels of education.
14. Changing aspirations of women themselves.

One or all of these factors may be involved in the decision to re-enter. But Feeney suggests that women are primarily returning in large measure because the women's movement has granted acceptability for women to become re-involved in education.

There are several characteristics of returning women students that are important for administrators and those in policy-making position. Age is certainly one of the most important characteristics for re-entry women, but others that may be equally important are marital status, number and ages of children, length of time since the last educational or work experience, and personal statements concerning the reasons for returning to higher education. Title and Denker (1980) suggest there are several factors which also act as preventative forces for mature women re-entering the educational system. These barriers have been categorized as institutional, situational, and dispositional.

Institutional factors that have excluded women from post-secondary education include sex and age quotas, financial aid practices, regulations, deficiencies in curriculum planning, insufficient student personnel services, and faculty and staff attitudes. The more serious institutional barriers are in the form of discrimination against part-time students and a virtual lack of financial support for the part-time student. Institutional practices concerning course offerings may make little or no effort at becoming flexible, i.e., there seem to be few attempts to systematically examine scheduling and course cycles over time in order to provide availability for the part-time student. Time limits on course or degree requirements are often a hindrance to the returning part-time student as are the schedules and the locations of the courses. Most typically, institutions may limit access to resources and support facilities for part-time students. This is particularly true of evening students. Offices of counseling, career planning and placement, advisement, financial aid, book stores, and some libraries are often open at hours scheduled for staff, rather than for student, convenience. (Title and Denker, 1980)

Situational or social barriers are those likely to arise from the social class and ethnic or racial group to which the returning woman belongs. Fewer women from lower socioeconomic groups are likely to participate in post-secondary education. (Cross, 1980) With the exception of black women, the college attendance rate of minority women is under that of males of all ethnic groups and of white females. There seems to be lower expectations for women, in general, and for women of minority groups specifically, to continue their educations. (Title and Denker, 1980)

III. THE CHANGING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DEMOGRAPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Hodgkinson (1983) overviews the demography of students in the 1980's and 1990's. Birthrates in the U.S. remained a "Baby Boom" high between 1946 and 1964 followed by a period of decline then rough stability or gentle incline after 1979. The "Baby Boom" age cohorts are now adults who are producing another demographic crest by 1998 with their own offspring and are themselves becoming the new generations of re-entry students.

While this fairly describes the national trend, it masks very distinct differences between various demographic sectors. The birth rate decline since 1964 was primarily among the white, middle class while birth rates for most minority groups remained constant, resulting in increased percentages of minorities among birth cohorts. As Table III indicates, these minority cohorts are heavily enrolling in the public schools, the educational institution for approximately 90% of the nation's elementary and secondary students. (Hodgkinson, 1983) It is in higher education's best interests, then, to assure that increasing high school attrition is reversed and that these minority students do well in public school and thus become college eligible especially in states with high minority enrollments. And, since 90% of the 1990 work force is at work today, the 10% added should represent a higher proportion of minority youth if they are educationally prepared to compete alongside their white peers. By 1990, minorities of all ages will constitute 20-25% of the total population, while their percentage among the youth cohorts will be over 30%. (Hodgkinson, 1983) This pattern is unfolding even faster in the sunbelt states where the numbers of high school graduates is already stabilizing or increasing due both to increases in fertility and immigration.

By 1990, it is anticipated that 19% of Americans will live in the West and 31% in the South as the population continues to shift to these areas creating very different problems for the expanding Sun Belt institutions in contrast to the declining Frost Belt institutions. Still, significant differences between minority groups exist. Currently, 28% of all black youth between 18 and 24 enter college but Hispanics enter at a rate between 5-15% for the same cohort. However, in contrast to previous generations of Hispanics, only 65% of 5-17 year old Hispanics speak Spanish and all but 16% speak English making these growing cohorts more likely to acquire sufficient bilingual skills to compete in English speaking college campuses. (Hodgkinson, 1983) Yet, there are regional differences among the various Hispanic subpopulations which may require different strategies of institutional response for each subgroup.

TABLE III

MINORITY PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
FALL 1980

State and Region	% of Total Enrollment	State and Region	% of Total Enrollment
United States	26.7	*Southeast*	
		Alabama	33.6
New England		Arkansas	23.5
Connecticut	17.0	Florida	32.2
Maine	0.9	Georgia	34.3
Massachusetts	10.7	Kentucky	9.1
New Hampshire	1.3	Louisiana	43.4
Rhode Island	8.2	Mississippi	51.6
Vermont	1.0	North Carolina	31.9
		South Carolina	43.5
Mideast		Tennessee	24.5
Delaware	28.8	Virginia	27.5
District of Col	96.4	West Virginia	4.3
Maryland	33.5		
New Jersey	28.4	*Southwest*	
New York	32.0	Arizona	33.7
Pennsylvania	14.9	New Mexico	57.0
		Oklahoma	20.8
Great Lakes		Texas	45.9
Illinois	28.6		
Indiana	12.0	*Rocky Mountain*	
Michigan	21.3	Colorado	22.1
Ohio	14.7	Idaho	8.2
Wisconsin	9.3	Montana	12.1
		Utah	7.3
Plains		Wyoming	7.5
Iowa	4.1		
Kansas	12.7	*Far West*	
Minnesota	5.9	California	42.9
Missouri	14.8	Nevada	18.9
Nebraska	10.5	Oregon	8.5
North Dakota	3.5	Washington	14.1
South Dakota	7.9	Alaska	28.4
		Hawaii	75.2

SOURCE: These data were presented at a conference sponsored by the Institute for Educational Leadership, November, 1982. (Hodgkinson, 1983)

IV. THE PROCESS OF ACTIVELY RECRUITING ADULT LEARNERS

More and more universities seem to be becoming aware that the adult age group has the largest potential for growth in the 1980's and beyond, possibly into the year 2000. (See Table I)) Some changes in methods would seem appropriate for colleges to meet the needs of this group of adult learners. Since the early 70's it has become somewhat easier for the re-entry student, who must work days, for example, to get a degree. Many colleges that previously offered only non-credit, continuing-education courses have developed a full night curriculum. Other schools with limited

programs have expanded them. Most would indicate the reason is at least partly economic.

Colleges and universities are discovering the power of actively advertising for this population. Directed, specific recruitment seems to meet the needs of a population in search of retraining and may also help universities face the realities of a now stable or decreasing traditional population pool.

Universities and colleges are using newspapers, television, and radio advertisements in an attempt to reach and attract from this population. This seems to be particularly true of community colleges and colleges that have been designed specifically to meet the needs of this age group, such as City University, Antioch College, British Open University and the University of Mid-America.

The scheduling of more and more classes during the evening hours and at places and times more convenient to an older, off-campus population speaks to an awareness of the need to make education more accessible to this group. Ferguson (1980) suggests that for too long schools have been entrenched bureaucracies whose practitioners have not had to compete for business nor have they had to stand for reelection or "attract patients, customers or clients." According to Ferguson, in an era of decreasing traditional population, the ability to recruit and attract new and different populations may be the most dynamic area for growth and, indeed, even obligatory for institutional survival.

There is some criticism of the process of active, aggressive recruitment of adult learners. Traditional educators seem to believe that the recruitment of adults into traditional educational programs will result ultimately in the spread of lockstep schooling and the development of an over-credentialed society. Another reoccuring criticism is that in their eagerness to recruit adult learners, universities are engaging in "academic hucksterism" and the selling of credentials through liberal policies of conferring credits which compromise academic standards. There is also a growing suspicion that colleges are more interested in meeting their own needs for survival by the recruitment of adults than in serving the learning needs of the adult student once they have been recruited. (Cross, 1982) Universities will have to face critical examination of their individual recruitment programs to insure that these programs are not solely aimed at promoting the survival of the institution, but at the improvement of adult learning opportunities.

The recruitment of adult students is occurring not only by colleges and univsities who currently are attracting about 12 million people, or 1/4 of adult learners. The other 3/4 or 46 million adults are being educated by such diverse sponsors as union colleges, corporation training schools, the military and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (Hodgkinson, 1983) Colleges and universities could and perhaps

should attempt recovery of some of these 46 million people into their institutions and reverse the growth of this "second system" of postsecondary education.

Adding to the recruitment strategy will need to be a growing recognition of the marital, parental and occupational histories of prospective students. While in 1950, 65% of the households had a working father, homemaker mother, and two or more school age children, that description currently only fits 17% of households, reflecting both higher divorce rates and higher work force participation rates for women. (Hodgkinson, 1983) Almost half of all children being born in the 1980's will be raised by a single parent for at least part of their lives. The exact influence of these demographic trends is unknown but these younger cohorts may not be an intensely home educated by parents who are busy working and possibly being students themselves which may influence their attitude and preparation for college work in the future. In addition, the rapid growth of adults 65 and older creates an additional market if their educational needs and financial means can be effectively determined and met by educational institutions.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF ADULT LEARNERS

The history of our changing population structure yields evidence as to who is and will be available for re-entry education. Apps (1980) has compiled statistics that show the implications for education of this changing structure of the adult population. The median age of the Unived States population is slowly creeping higher. In 1975 it was 28.8; in 1980, the median age was 30.2; and in 1990 it is projected at 32.8. The number of people in the 24-and-younger age group is declining and those in the 26-64 age groups are increasing. In 1975, 93.9 million people were 24 or younger; by 1990 predictions indicate a drop to 89.9 million in this age group. In 1975, 97.3 million people were 25-64. Predictions for 1990 show 123.8 million in this age group with an added increase for those over 65 from 22.4 million to 29.8 million. (Apps, 1980)

There are some disturbing characteristics to be found in the overall socioeconomic status of adult involvement in higher education. Adult education, from all reported trends, appears to be elitist and is getting more so. As a group, today's adult learners are disproportionately white, well-educated and make good salaries. Certain populations are significantly under-represented in organized learning activities for adults: racial minorities, including blacks; people with

less than a high school education; those whose annual family income is under $8,000; people 45 and older; and those living in the central cities or on farms. (Cross, 1980)

The greatest increase in education participation between 1969-1975 was by white women with a college degree and family incomes of $25,000 or more. (Cross, 1980) The rate of growth for women is double the rate of growth for men, the rate of participation for college graduates is twice that of high school graduates and the participation of whites has increased eight times in proportion to blacks and other minorities.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

Hardly a college or university has failed to feel the impact of adults returning to campus and few have failed to adapt in some way to this new, older student on campus. The nature and the types of adaptations, however, vary from campus to campus and are tied to a complex series of pressures applied as the campus slowly takes on a delightful shade of grey. Ackell (1982) has defined three stages of adaptation:

STAGE ONE:

The Laissez-Faire Stage - This stage is characterized by a simple removal of any barriers or artificial constraints on adults. (i.e.. age requirements, parental consent forms, sex or racial requirements, and an easing of the requirements of years in and out of college.)

This system allows adults access to do the best they can within a system that works neither for nor against them. Adults are allowed to be as entrepreneurial and aggressive as they wish in dealing with the institution, according to Ackell. In the Laissez-Faire stage institutions tend to lack provisions for adult students, i.e.,

--No active recruitment
--No special support services
--No curriculum development efforts especially for adults
--No faculty development efforts for dealing with adults

Ackell suggests that there is an overall institutional assumption that student problems are intrinsic to their role as students, not their age, maturity, and/or experiences.

STAGE TWO:

The Separatist Stage in which institutions, when faced with an increased and increasing enrollment of adult students, soon realize that age is relevant to student needs. Adults are essentially segregated from the major student body and given separate specially developed programs, usually at different times and locations from the traditional student body and often with a lack of effective support services.

Ackell suggests that these programs are also given a priority and status demonstrably lower than those of traditional programs. Adults become exploited economically and sometimes educationally as well. Fees are not adjusted, the services are weak, if available at all, and there is usually substantially less general fund support than that given to programs for younger students. Other characteristics of this stage include:

--A clearly segregated and identified adult or evening program.
--A separate or part-time faculty for this evening unit consisting primarily of adjunct or part-time faculty and some regular faculty.
--Limited or tightly controlled opportunities for evening students to take day classes and for day students to take evening classes.
--Different programs and degree requirements for day or regular programs and evening or adult programs.
--Separated and different services for adults.
--Limited noninstructional student services for adults.
--Low status for administrators of adult programs granting them limited or no access to university policy-making processes.

STAGE THREE:

The Equity Stage has characteristics are the following:

--Active recruitment of adult students.
--Appropriate delivery systems for adult learning.
--Fully integrated curriculum.
--Fully integrated faculty.
--Provisions for degree credits for prior learning.
--Administrative service made available by phone, mail, during the evening, and on weekends.
--Academic advising available at hours adults are on campus.
--Personal counseling, financial advising, career counseling, and other student support services available in the evening and responsive to adult problems.
--Senior policy-making bodies of the university aware of adult students.
--Fully empowered adult administrators.
--Administrative policy and practice that is proactive rather than reactive in dealing with adult students, their needs, and their problems.

A TYPOLOGY OF STUDENTS

Carole Kaswon (1980) developed a typology which helps to show the different characteristics and needs of the adult as compared to the younger student. (See Table III.) The development of the typology was undertaken because she felt that higher education has not sufficiently acknowledged adult education in its mission, curriculum, or instruction. This composite typology of adult students as compared to younger students provides many basic, key differences that the personnel of colleges and universities should be aware of in order both to respond to the needs of and appreciate the differences between adults and younger students.

However, it would seem important to acknowledge that some of the characteristics mentioned by Kaswon cross the boundaries she establishes for traditional and non-traditional students. Age does not always establish the boundaries of dependence and independence in terms of emotion, time focus, confidence, orientation, or decision making. This typology is best used as a general tool. There would seem to be areas of cross boundary competency and/or lack of competency in both younger and older students. The strong point of the typology is the potential for differences.

TABLE IV STUDENT TYPOLOGY (Kaswon, 1980)

YOUNGER STUDENTS	OLDER STUDENTS
1. Quasi-dependent beings	1. Independent beings
2. Limited emotional/financial support for significant others.	2. Major emotional/financial support for significant others.
3. Major time focus on academic and related extra-curricular activities.	3. Competing time focus on job, family, community, personal responsibility, in relation to academic activity.
4. High identification with student role.	4. Composite identification with many roles.
5. Seeking out self-identity.	5. Renewing self-identity.
6. Limited awareness of own capabilities.	6. Continuing growth of awareness of own capabilities.
7. Minimal exposure to life/career role models.	7. Significant exposure to life/career role models.
8. Minimal self-confidence and developing sense of maturity.	8. Developed and diversified self-confidence and maturity.
9. Introspective orientation.	9. Varied self/other orientation.
10. Impulsive (short-term) decision making.	10. Capacity for delayed gratification and long-term decision making.
11. Limited exposure to strategies for learning.	11. Varied strategies to learning.
12. Passive learner role.	12. Active learner role.
13. Limited history of self-directed learning.	13. Diversified opportunities for prior development of self-directed learning.
14. Minimal analytical critical problem-solving skills.	14. Developed analytical critical problem-solving skills.
15. Limited prior life experience.	15. Varied rich life opportunites and experiences.

SUMMARY

Ackell (1980) suggests that change is hardly every easy, and growth is almost always incremental. People and organizations adapt to the present by building on a foundation of behaviors and structures developed in the past. Growth comes rapidly and easily in one area, slowly and with difficulty in other areas. But change does happen.

He suggests that there are several key developmental points in the evolution of a truly equitable model for re-entry education that can perhaps make the evolution a less painful process:

1. When a university has developed a substantial adult constituency, it should modify its mission statement to express clearly a commitment to adults and should assure that this change is fully understood and endorsed by the governing board.
2. The president and executive staff, especially the chief academic officers, must clearly, frequently, and consistently articulate the university's commitment regarding adult students to all university employees.
3. University long-range planning must consistently address the needs of adults as a major constituency of the university.
4. Offices of Student Life, Admissions, Registration, Financial Aid, Career Planning and Placement, and Counseling should be made aware that a substantial portion of the student body is over the age of 25 and aging and in need of their support.
5. The university should consistently work to develop a personal and institutional philosophy that embraces a commitment to serve and educate adults as equal members of the academic community.
6. Institutions should clearly and thoughtfully address the differences between traditional requirements for admissions, transfer, residency, and the real requirements necessitated by academic programs.
7. Appropriate classes, schedules and course continuations should be offered at times and places convenient to the total student body.
8. Universities need to recognize that adult students have schedules different from those of traditional students and thus require longer, later operation hours for many university functions and support services (bookstore hours, library hours, etc.). (Ackell, 1982)

The re-entry student is a consumer. The institution offers the product. There seems to be a need for an awareness of the problems each creates for the other. Universities need to be aware of the potential student market, adult students' needs, and the institution's responsibility to these adults as they become more and more numerous on the campus. Adult students need to be concerned with the impact they are having on the institutions and the traditional student body. Most importantly, adult students may have to realize that changes in traditional structures to accommodate adults and their time frames will take time and continued effort, and may not come as easily or readily as most adults would hope. Adult students as a group represent more diversity in life situations, goals, previous experiences, skill, intellectural capacities and styles of learning than most institutions are accustomed to acknowledging or planning for. A realistic awareness of this diversity is important for the institution and the student.

Perhaps what is most important is an awareness of what this can mean in terms of educational quality for the institution, the traditional student body and the non-traditional and re-entry student body. Educational institutions must learn to serve the students they do and could have, not continue in ways that served those they once had.

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